COMOX LAKE BLUFFS ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

PURPOSE STATEMENT

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Approved by:

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Environmental Stewardship Division

Date:

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Date:

COMOX LAKE BLUFFS ECOLOGICAL RESERVE
Purpose Statement

Ecological reserves are areas selected to preserve representative and special natural ecosystems, plant and animal species, features and phenomena. The key goal of ecological reserves is to contribute to the maintenance of biological diversity and the protection of genetic materials. All consumptive resource uses and the use of motorized vehicles are prohibited. Research and educational activities may be carried out but only under permit.

Primary Role

The **primary** role of Comox Lake Bluffs Ecological Reserve is to protect a unique ecosystem and unusual botanical phenomena. The ecological reserve contains bluffs and shallow soils with an assemblage of regionally rare plants and communities. Although much of the sites has been logged, it has high levels of biodiversity with several species at the limits of their range and unusual dry open-site plant communities in the Coastal Western Hemlock zone, such as Douglas-fir (shore pine) /arbutus /manzanita /bearberry and Douglas fir (shore pine) /arbutus /Rocky Mountain juniper. The least moonwort, a blue-listed plant, is found here.

Management Issues

Known Management Issue	Response
Lack of knowledge of natural values	➢ Encourage research of rare elements.
Recreational use of the ecological reserve (Used extensively for mountain biking, running, camping, horseback rising, dirt biking, and beach use)	➢ Pursue park designation on the portion of the ER that is suitable and used for recreation purposes. ➢ Maintain the bluffs as ecological reserve. ➢ Continue conducting BRIM. ➢ Designate mountain bike paths in appropriate areas and remove trails in sensitive locations. Encourage local user groups to participate in trail maintenance and in protection of the natural values. ➢ Increase public awareness the ecological reserve.
Adjacency issues -- logging has occurred right up to the north boundary increasing ease of access	➢ Review forest development plans to ensure adjacency concerns such as increased access, visual impacts, and windthrow are addressed. ➢ Undertake restoration work when resources allow.

Conservation

Representation - ecosection	☒	Minimal contribution of 0.88% to the overall representation of the Nanaimo Lowlands Ecosection (NAL), which is under represented and has only 1.4% protected provincially
- biogeoclimatic subzone/variant	☒	Minimal contribution of 0.48% to the overall representation of CWHxm1, which is under represented in the protected areas system with only 2.1% of its area being protected
Special Features	☒	Several species at the limits of their range; unusual plant communities and sensitive ecosystems, exposed rocky bluffs
Rare/Endangered Values	☒	Blue-listed plant least moonwort which is rare in southwestern BC
Scientific/Research Opportunities	☒	Research of rare plant species

Recreation

Representation backcountry	☐	Not Applicable
destination	☐	Not Applicable
travel corridor	☐	Not Applicable
local recreation	☐	Local recreation such as camping, swimming and trail/beach use occurs and is not appropriate in ecological reserves
Special Opportunities	☐	Not Applicable
Education/Interpretation Opportunities	☒	Potential for school stewardship/outreach program

Cultural Heritage

Representation	☒	Logging history, First Nations values unknown
Special Feature	☐	None known at this time

Other Management Considerations

Other Designations	☐	Not Applicable
Relationship to other PAs	☒	Part of a system of ecological reserves established in BC to protect special places and features for research and education purposes
Co-operative Management Arrangements	☐	Not applicable

Partnerships	☐	Not Applicable
Vulnerability	☒	Recreation use on bluffs, adjacent logging
Relationship to other Strategies	☐	Not Applicable

Area: 47 hectares

Date of establishment: April 30, 1996